

Oxford Democrat.

No. 21, Vol. 4, New Series.

Paris, Maine, Tuesday, October 1, 1844.

Old Series. No. 31, Vol. 13.

OXFORD DEMOCRAT,

PUBLISHED TUESDAY, BY

G. W. SMITH,

EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

TERMS:—One Dollar and Fifty Cents in advance. ADVERTISEMENTS inserted on reasonable terms; the Proprietor not being accountable for any error beyond the amount charged for the advertisement. A reasonable deduction will be made for cash in advance.

Book and Job Printing

EXECUTED WITH NEATNESS AND DESPATCH.

POLITICAL.

THE TARIFF.

Mr. Wright's Speech

At Waterville, Jefferson County, N. Y., on Tuesday, August 20.

[Reported for the Daily Albany Argus.]

Mr. Wright said he had been—in the course of the performance of the services which for many years had been devolved upon him by the kindness of his fellow-citizens—often called upon by citizens and subjects of foreign governments to converse about our popular institutions. And when he had undertaken to tell them that with us the people were not mere subjects to be governed, but were a part of government itself—aye, that all the government we had rested on them as its basis, and received its direction from their will—it was a statement which they seldom failed to receive with incredulity. The proudest moment of his life would be this, if now he could have an intelligent citizen of one of the governments of the old world standing by his side, and could point him to this vast assemblage, and ask him whether he did not think that the American people felt that they were a part of the government of the country. Look (continued Mr. W., as if this imaginary position, and speaking to the foreign subject by his side), look at this sky (which was still lowering), and at this assembled multitude, and tell me, according to your notions of government, what has brought this great mass here. Would he not believe that it is because in your breasts the deep, abiding consciousness that a crisis has come in the affairs of our government demanding your earnest, patriotic attention, without reference to the character of the weather or the comfort of your position. Aye, it would be a demonstration to such a man beyond the power of argument; and I fellow-citizens, would that you had one more competent than I am to aid you in the discharge of your duty as freemen of this country. Yet, called as I have been, with the utmost cheerfulness, as but a speck in the debt of gratitude I owe to the democracy of this State, and most especially to the democracy of Jefferson, and Lewis, and Oswego and St. Lawrence, will I devote the strength of my voice and the best exertions of my feeble mind.

Every election (Mr. Wright went on) brings with it to us, issues of vast importance dividing the two parties of our country. This election has brought along with it, with many others, much discussed before you four years ago, one of pervading and universal interest. I refer to the question of a tariff. It is a vast question—a question of great complication—but I believe, with a little of your calm, dispassionate reflection, and a fair draught on our candor, we can arrive at conclusions clear and unquestioned even upon this intricate subject. What, (continued he), is the difference between two parties on this subject? Our opponents tell us they are in favor of a protective tariff; and that a protective tariff, as they understand it, is a source of almost every blessing, individually and collectively, to every portion of the whole country. That we may understand each other perfectly, let us first ascertain, if we can, what we should properly understand by a protective tariff; for I believe a brief examination will satisfy us that a confusion and misapplication of terms has produced as much difficulty on this great question as any other cause. But first, to remove from our way, as Democrats, a stumbling-block which our ingenious opponents place there, let us look at what they mean, and how we should understand them when they tell you that we are the free-trade party of the country, and refer you to a portion of our brethren at the south who assume that name. It is a misapplication of terms to us. We know and feel it. We are not in favor of free-trade in the proper, fair, and legitimate sense of these terms. Are our southern brethren so? Do they desire the repeal of all duties, and that the necessary revenue shall be raised by a direct tax on property? I cannot answer any further than I am informed; but I will give you in candor and frankness the information I have. I admit, when I saw this name assumed by those who acted politically with me, at the south, it startled and alarmed me. I could not conceive that men of sense and information, of extensive practical experience should have adopted notions of that stamp, as practicable under our government. On repairing to Washington at the commencement of the last session, finding that this subject must be pressed on us for discussion and action, I went to some of these southern members of Congress whom I had known many years, men of truth and candor, and whom I had thought men of sound views, and said "I beg you to tell me, if you had satisfied yourself that your revenue system is all wrong—that we should no longer tax foreign imports to raise revenue to support government, but have a direct tax upon the property of the country?" "No," said the first man I asked, "I entertain no such opinion—never have, and I know of none who do."

"Well, then, will you be good enough to tell me what you mean. You call yourself a free-trader?" "I do so, and mean this, I am friendly to having the trade of the country kept as free

as it can be kept, and raise the revenue necessary for the support of government; and when it is so, I call it free-trade, because it is a free as our institutions will permit." "Then, sir, you are in favor of a tariff for revenue, and of so much duty as may be necessary to support the government?" "To be sure, as much as is yourself." And here was the explanation. Though he called himself a free-trade and anti-tariff man, he was in favor of a tariff for revenue; and opposed only to a tariff laid for the mere purpose of protection alone. This was the explanation given by all these gentlemen of their positions as free-trade men. If they were candid, if they told me the truth, they are not free-trade men, though they call themselves so. Free-trade necessarily implies an entire absence of duties, and I have not yet met the first man in public life in this Union, who will admit in conversation that he is in favor of such a principle.

Mr. W. went on to advert to another misapplication of terms. He said to those gentlemen that he was in favor of a protective tariff, and thereby was, "you are in favor of a heresy, an oppression, an inequality in the administration of the government." But what was a protective tariff, in the proper sense of that term? It was a tariff, in his judgment, imposed for the great purpose of supplying the government with revenue, and so arranged as to protect, all the great interests of the country—the main and principal object of which should be revenue for the public treasury. Even his southern friends would tell him that he found no fault with that—but what he understood by a protective tariff would be a tariff of duties imposed not to raise revenue for the treasury, but purely and simply to protect certain favorite and particular interests to the prejudice of others. Neither was Mr. W. in favor of such a tariff. Here then was an explanation of what Mr. W. meant by a protective tariff, and of what his southern friends meant by free-trade—Where, then, was the difference between us?

Mr. W. stated what his rule would be in arranging a revenue tariff. He would by no means lay the same rate of duty on every article of importation. The thing was impracticable in itself, because one article would not bear ten per cent, until you prohibited it, and destroy'd revenue. Another would bear 50 per cent, and yet the trade hold up, from the nature of the article. It was absurd, in a revenue sense to say "put a uniform duty on both." Because, do that, and you either fail to get the revenue you want, or you prohibit the importation altogether. Mr. W. would then discriminate according to the article. That would be one ground of discrimination. Another ground. Every community consumed of foreign imported articles, a portion which are really necessities of life, or have become so among all classes. Another portion were emphatically luxuries. They were purchased and consumed to gratify taste, the pride of dress, the pride of living, the style of our houses, equipages, &c. Would he tax those two classes alike to raise revenue? Would he tax the necessities of life, which every man, woman and child must consume, and the luxuries of the rich equally? No. He would tax the necessities as lightly as he could, and secure the necessary revenue; and he would tax the luxuries as heavily as they could be without destroying the revenue by cutting up the trade. This was another ground of discrimination. But there was another, and a third ground. There were certain interests in the country, which came in competition with similar interests in foreign countries—and Mr. W. would discriminate in reference to them. When an importation came in competition with a domestic article, he would raise the tax on the foreign article, as far as revenue required, to favor the domestic. But he would not go so far as to defeat the object of the whole—the object of obtaining revenue for the treasury.

To see how far we might go—take first the agricultural interest of this section of the country. Where are the articles you could benefit by a tariff? What were our principle staple articles? Bread stuffs were one. Could you benefit the farmers and the growers of bread-stuffs, by putting a duty on foreign bread-stuffs? No. Why not? Because we do not import bread-stuffs, but export them. We looked for a market not merely to our own country but the whole world, and we sent our flour to all quarters of the globe. What then made the price of our flour, and where was it made? In the great markets of our country—in New York, Boston and Philadelphia principally. What governed the prices there? Was it the call of our own people or those towns for flour? No; but the entire demand for flour in New York governed the price there—as well the demand for exportation as for consumption. What good then did your duty on foreign flour and wheat do, when foreign wheat and flour did not come there? None whatever. The duty neither brought money into the treasury nor the pockets of the farmer. This was no fault of the law, but result from the impossibility of protecting an article so as to raise the price, while we regularly exported it. So with our beef. We raised more than our own people could buy, and we looked to other countries for a market for our surplus. Then the duty under the present tariff (100 per cent. on the present price of beef) did our farmers no good. It could not. Follow on with your cheese. The present tariff imposed a duty of nine cents a pound on cheese. Where was the farmer of this or any other county of the State, who could say this has had even a little effect on his cheese this year! [Laughter.] Aye, said Mr. W., I fear it will prove to be true, that the farmer will be glad to get even half the duty for the whole price of his cheese. So the duty on these articles was of no practicable utility—not

because the fault was in Congress or the law, but because we exported these articles, and they therefore could not be protected.

If then these articles were out of the reach of protection, so far the agricultural interest was beyond the reach of protection. Where did the farmer come within it? On his wool. We never exported wool. Was it not easy to see how our duty protected our farmers? For when the Spaniard or the Belgian brought his wool here, he must first pay our duty and meet our farmers on equal terms. The duty then was a protection and the article was subjected to protection. It would be reached by Congress in regulating this tariff law. He would, then, raise the duty high on wool, in protection to articles that required no protection. He would do this for the protection of one great interest. But would he go so high that wool could not be imported? Prohibit importation, and thus defeat any revenue from wool? If he did, what would be the consequence? It would give the farmer who raised wool a perfect monopoly of the market. They could command their own price, according to the demand for wool, the foreign article being excluded; and every citizen who did not raise wool, and must wear woolen cloth must pay more. And where was his remuneration? If he paid a revenue duty, his remuneration would be a revenue and relief from taxation. But if foreign wool was prohibited, it paid nothing into the treasury, and in addition to the price of woolen cloth, something else must be taxed. This would be clearly not protection, but prohibition. And here was the difference between us and our respected opponents. They went for all the duty they could get—all the duty they could impose—for prohibitory, instead of protective duties. This Mr. W. was against. He would not raise up a monopoly among our farmers, any sooner than among our manufacturers; and no sooner among our manufacturers than others. He believed in fair healthy competition, in every trade and every thing. But he would protect the farmer where he could. See the inequality, (continued Mr. W.) of this prohibitory policy. In reference to wool, you benefit the farmer and give him a monopoly. You get no revenue. His neighbor raises grain; another beef, another butter, and cheese and pork. You cannot protect them; and yet you must tax them on some other article of consumption, to supply to the treasury the revenue of which it is deprived by your prohibition of wool. Is this fair, useful, equal, just? To my mind it is not either. So long as you derive the revenue, and your duty is a revenue duty, with protection incident, all other interests derive an equivalent, because you get revenue. But prohibition sinks revenue and raises the price. In other words, you establish a legal monopoly.

Carry this along to the manufactured article. Wool is the essential article of northern agriculture which can be protected. Hemp, in the south-west and west can also be protected, though I think the time is close when it will cease—already several cargoes of American hemp have gone to Europe, and the experiment has proved very fortunate. As the new States continue to open, it will come to be an article of exportation. Now, it is protected. The sugar of the south is a protected article. It is highly protected. But protection there yields revenue. It soundly taxes us, as every body can testify. We don't complain. Let it go reasonably there. But suppose you carry the duty to prohibition, and to protect the sugar growers of Louisiana, entirely exclude the foreign article. What would we pay for sugar? and what our remuneration for the three millions of revenue from sugar? We should be taxed on some necessary article, to supply the deficiency in the public treasury. This is an illustration of the prohibitory system, and if it is just and politic in one instance, one interest will demand it as strongly as the other.

During the last session, I was one of those who were willing to modify the present tariff. I would not have agitated this question voluntarily, although I believed that while the law contained many good things, it also contained many unjust and bad ones. But I was willing, when the subject came up and I was compelled to act, to do what I believed to be right. I will give one instance in which I thought the law defective. As to this very article of wool—I think with safety to our farmers, it might be reduced some—made to yield more revenue, and yet be an equally effective protection to them. Whether I am mistaken or not, time will determine. But I speak of the duty on coarse wool from abroad. There is a description invoiced abroad as costing not more than seven cents, which pays a duty of five cents on a dollar in value, a practical duty of three mills on the pound of wool. It is said this wool don't come in competition with ours. We grow no wool worth seven cents, it is true; but our farmers do raise wool that will answer the very same purpose that this does, to every practical extent. With my own eyes in a journey from Washington in the month of June, I saw in Vermont a manufactory, surrounded by wool growers, employed busily and exclusively in working the wool of Smyrna, which paid five cents duty on a dollar, or three mills on the pound. Another factory across the street was working American wool. Both make the same goods; satins for the New York market. How stood these manufacturers with reference to protection? Precisely alike—the cloth made by each is protected by a duty of forty cents on a dollar. But the wool manufactured by the one is protected by a duty of forty cents on a dollar, and the other, with a duty of five cents on a dollar. Is the protection equal here? It is a protection to the manufacturer, equal in both cases. But if the coarse wool was charged with as much duty as the fine, would I have found one factory

working the wool of Smyrna? No. If it is right to protect the manufacturer, it is right to protect the farmer also, and to the same extent. This is one defect. There are a vast many others. A great many duties under this law are what are denominated specific duties; not duties on the value, but duties on the pound weight of the goods. Take the strong, firm, black silks, which is an article worn generally in all our country towns and villages. Weigh a piece of it: value it. It will weigh about double the same number of yards of fine figured French silks. It will cost half as much money abroad. Yet the pound weight pays the same duty of two and a half dollars, in the one case, as in the other. What is the consequence? The plain farmer's and mechanic's family, who do not and cannot indulge in silks beyond the plain substantial dress of the description I have designated, pay about double the duty that the family does that indulges in the extra fine and light silks of France. I think this is perverting the whole matter. If you favor either, you should favor those who purchase and wear the necessary article. I do not pretend that a silk dress is necessary; but it is very desirable and comfortable to our wives and daughters and sisters, and we desire them to have them; and because we do, shall we pay double and treble what the lady does who is able to wear the rich silks and gaudy laces of foreign countries?

Again—our coarse cottons—and I speak in the presence of those who understand this better than I do—take our duty on cotton manufactures. They are not specific; but there is another contrivance applicable to them, called a minimum duty, which may be thus explained. The law says, every yard of cotton, bleached, or unbleached, shall be valued when imported at twenty cents the square yard, and on that value pay a duty of thirty cents on a dollar. Now, of all the cotton worn by the mass of citizens of this country, what does the square yard cost abroad where it comes from? What do you suppose is the average? We purchase, I believe, in the retail stores, at from 6 to 16 cents. It is a very fine and rich article when you go beyond that. The average would be 10 or 12 1/2 cents. What would be the cost abroad? Some of it 6 or 7 cents—the mass of it. What is the duty? Why, you must value the yard at 20 cents, and at that value pay a duty of 30 cents on a dollar. You value it at two or three times as much as it is worth, then add thirty per cent.—thus making the duty sixty or ninety, and as the tables will show, one hundred and twenty per cent. Take those that can afford the shirtings and sheetings that abroad cost 20 cents. What do they pay? Thirty per cent. duty. Here the true principle is reversed. The necessary article is taxed the highest, if not entirely prohibited. I believe it is prohibited; but the domestic competition relieves us from a grievous monopoly in that part of the tariff. Take up the tables of importations, and you will find bleached cottons coming in on the highest valuations. Take the calicoes. Value every square yard at 30 cents, then charge a duty of 30 per cent. on that. All of you purchase calico. What do you pay for the mass of wear in this country? Twelve and a half or sixteen cents. But the statute values it at 30, and then charges a duty of 30 cents on the dollar. Take calico which costs abroad 30 cents. That pays 30 per cent. duty; while the plain and cheap article, in common use, pays double and treble that duty. Here the true principle is again reversed. The cheaper and necessary article is the highest taxed. There is a discrimination—but the wrong way. And here I think the law defective. I doubt if you don't discriminate enough on these goods when you make a uniform duty on the value on all. If it is necessary to tax cottons 30 per cent. tax all the same. Not put an artificial value on the poorer article to increase the duty. Still, I would protect generously—and to the full extent of what is just—these manufacturers of cotton and wool. They should be protected, but not in this unequal way.

Let us consider (continued Mr. W.) as connected with these articles, the prohibitory policy—or that is the policy of our opponents. Suppose we carry our duty on cotton and woolen up to prohibition—and to protect our manufacturers, and incidentally, in the article of wool, our farmers. We go so high with our duty as to prohibit importation. We first give our manufacturers a monopoly of the market. Then we have only domestic competition to protect us from exorbitant prices. But we lose six millions of revenue, and we must be taxed on some other articles to make it up. And I ask any man who has the curiosity to examine this subject, to go to the tables of importations for any number of years, and see on what he can lay duties to supply this deficiency of six millions made by raising this prohibition. I know of none but the tea and coffee, which are now free. And would it be right to give the manufacturers of cotton and wool a monopoly of the markets, and then tax the whole community with the necessities of life? I believe it would be unjust, unequal, and most impolitic.

But, we are told, this policy is necessary to protect the labor of the country—and that it is the productive labor of the Union which we desire to protect by this prohibitory system. Let us see how far the labor of the country can be protected—how far it is in the power of Congress to protect it. We have always seen that labor employed in raising grain, beef, pork, butter and cheese, cannot be protected because they cannot by duties change the value of them. We export them. Then you cannot protect that part of the labor of the country. You can protect in this sense the manufacturing labor. Let us see how it will operate, and how far labor will be benefited. Here (alluding to the village of Watervorn)

are manufacturers, I believe, of cotton and wool, and all about you are farmers raising grain, beef, pork, and making butter and cheese. Now the manufacturers, are protected by a duty of say 30, 40, 50, 60 per cent on these articles—at least an average of 30 or 40. We will assume that they can afford to pay 20 or 30 per cent more for labor. But the farmers all about them, the mechanics in the village not engaged in these branches of manufacture, cannot afford to pay more. Will the manufacturer say, "Here is a farmer—he can't pay more than 7 dollars a month—but I am protected—I can afford 15 dollars." Is that your experience? I doubt not there are many laboring men here. Or will the manufacturer come to you and pay just as little as will hire you away from the farmers? If the farmer pays ten dollars the manufacturer will pay eleven. But, though he can afford it, will he pay fifteen? My experience is not so. My study of human nature teaches that it is not so. Every man will hire as cheaply as he can, and pay only enough to hire the best labor. One farmer turns his attention to growing wool. He wants two or three hired men. A neighbor of his raises wheat, and he wants one two or three. Another neighbor raises cattle and keeps a dairy. Well, the wool grower is protected by 40 per cent on wool. Does he pay 40 per cent more for the labor that he hires, than the man who hires labor for his grain or beef? No. All pay as little as they can command labor for. If there was a deficiency of labor, the wool grower would, most likely, get it, for he can give most. Don't understand me to suppose that the farmer receives the same compensation for labor that the manufacturer does—but I mean according to the branch of labor in which he is employed. What controls the price of labor? The aggregate demand for labor in the whole. All who want to hire will go into the same market, and will pay nearly the same rate of wages, in proportion to the description of labor they want. Now you can't protect but one of several branches of agricultural industry. How then can you protect labor by extending your monopoly to them? No further than you can extend the aggregate demand for labor, and raise up the whole. And you can judge how far protection on wool will raise the price of the whole agricultural labor of the country.

But our opponents tell us you stop short.—There is another position that will help you out of the difficulty. You must change your system, and by your prohibitory policy turn so much labor to manufacturing employments that the manufacturers and mechanics will eat up all the agricultural products of the country. Then you give a home market to our farmers, and thus protect all their productions. That is true. If by law, you can turn so much of the productive labor of the country to manufacturing and mechanical arts, as to make these branches equal to the consumption of all the agricultural products, and we cease to export bread stuffs, beef, &c., then you can protect the farmer in his whole interest. But how will it then stand with the manufacturing and mechanic interests? Will the farmers be able to turn round and buy all the manufactures of the country? For if they can't your system is just as bad, only you have changed sides. [Laughter.] Now the farmer cannot be protected, to the whole extent, and the manufacturer none at all; because for two thirds of their articles they must depend upon exportation—and the moment they are compelled to go abroad for a market, they are as much beyond protection as the farmer is now. Then, how will it stand?—will the country be the gainer? Will it be in a more prosperous and healthy condition? And especially, will the manufacturing and mechanical interests be better off? We can answer this question if we believe in experience and history. The government of Great Britain, to which we are pointed for an example of the wisdom of this prohibitory policy, have gone through with this. They have tried the experiment and most effectually. They commenced with protection to manufactures, by 70 and 100 per cent duties. But they had a more efficient system than we have. The British government neither depends on public opinion nor on constitutional restrictions to carry forward its policy. What did they do? At the start, when it became an object of government to protect a particular interest, they said in terms in the law, "this shall not be imported." And for two centuries, the importation of woolen cloth into England was entirely prohibited—no duty about it.

It was made penal for any subject to wear cloth not woven and spun within the realm. Well, they forced enough of their population into manufacturing, to consume all the products of agriculture. What is the consequence? Population increased. The farming interest turned back on them and demanded protection against foreign bread, and foreign meat, and foreign provisions, and now have got a protective duty of more than 100 per cent. on every necessary of life—and the manufacturing labor of the country is starving to death. That is experience. There the thing has been tried. And now they have got to a point which is unchanging so long as the agricultural interest can control. Let me add a word which may be relevant to a state of things with us. How is it that the agricultural interest of Great Britain, composing seven per cent. of its population, is able to command the legislative policy of that great country? It is because the government, in the course of the pursuit of this policy, has built up a debt resting on the land of the country—the stock held by the landholders and landlords of the country—which the government cannot pay—and through its credit and its debt, the land interest commands and must command, while that interest exists, its legislative policy. And it can command protection to its wheat and beef and other productions while the

addressed the meeting.

